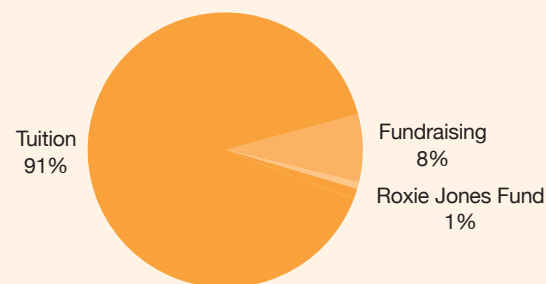


4th SAVE THE DATE

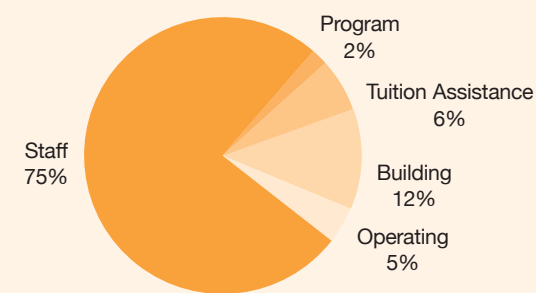
This year marks Pacific Primary's 40th Anniversary and we are excited to celebrate with everyone who has made the school what it is today! To pay tribute to this momentous milestone, we are in the midst of planning several fun events for the community to reconnect, celebrate and reflect on the importance of early childhood education.

Please save the date for Pacific Primary's 40th Anniversary Block Party Celebration: Saturday, October 18th, 2:00-4:00 PM at Pacific Primary. If you would like more information on Pacific Primary's 40th Anniversary celebrations, please contact Emma Peat at 40years@pacificprimary.org.

Financial Snapshot 2013/14



2013/14 Operating Income



2013/14 Operating Expenses

"In late 2013, we refinanced the bonds we issued in conjunction with opening the Orange Sun School into low-fixed rate bank financing. We will reinvest most of our financing savings, or 2.5% of our annual budget, into the school's most important asset: our staff!" – Ron Brown, Treasurer

As we prepare for our 40th Anniversary later this year, we are updating our Alumni database. If you have new contact info or have reconnected with a former Pacific Primary friend, please let us know at info@pacificprimary.org.

THE FUND FOR THE FUTURE

As Pacific Primary celebrates its 40th Anniversary, we are pleased to share that we have launched an endowment campaign to support the school's next 40 years. To date, we have raised nearly \$1 million! If you would like to learn more about the Fund for the Future, or are interested in supporting this effort, please contact Belann at:

(415) 409-1961 or
belann@pacificprimary.org

The Pacific Primary Sun

Reflections—
Teachers, Parents
and Community



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SPRING 2014

Reflective Teaching

By Justin Walsh and Rebecca Wieder



Panda Tree Exploration

Back when we were in grade school, most teachers followed a predetermined, start-to-finish curriculum for the school year, and at the beginning of each new school year they would bring down and dust off that old box of curriculum and get after it again. Need proof? Justin has four older siblings, and over a ten-year span all of them worked through the same identical planet assignment in 6th Grade science class.

Much of preschool learning operates on this framework. It begins with an autumnal theme, moves onto space, then dinosaurs and eventually to a beach theme in the summer. But twelve years ago, that all changed when Belann Giarretto, Executive Director, attended a workshop on emergent curriculum at the annual National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conference. Feeling so inspired by what she learned, she started in motion, Pacific Primary's shift from using traditional theme-based curriculum towards emergent curriculum and the 'project' approach. No longer willing to rely on the

tried and true activities that teachers had used for decades, she planned numerous trainings and workshops on how best to implement emergent curriculum. The goal was to move from an 'embalmed' curriculum that was no longer exciting, to one that gives teachers the skills to observe and build new curriculum around children and teachers' interests.

The difference is significant. With emergent curriculum, teachers are learning along with the children and, despite it being more work, are much more invested and enthusiastic about the process. More part-time support staff was brought in to help smooth transitions and full-time teachers gradually began introducing emergent curriculum concepts into the classroom. And before long, that dusty old box of curriculum found its way into the recycling bin.

Projects from emergent curriculum have ranged from 'Bones' to 'Birds.' The projects may last for months and are linked to all areas of the curriculum. The Bone Project came out of the children's fear of skeletons before Halloween. The teachers brought in books about bones, 'provoked' the children's interest and observed that many children were fascinated. The project lasted over three months and included opening owl pellets to find bones, looking at x-rays, learning how to make casts, visiting a pet hospital and making bread bones.

Today, the first day of school brings no preconceived notion of what projects or "themes" will emerge. Of course, the teachers know that there will be explorations of science, math, literacy, movement, and the arts. But rather than some neat, organized teacher plan, curriculum emerges from two sources: the children and their interests.

For this approach to work successfully, teachers are afforded more time to observe the children and trained to identify common play themes that point to the deep curiosity of the children. Like lenses, teachers are

expected to mold and reflect back to the children, to deepen their attention and love of learning. It is this mindful teaching centered on having the child doing the discovery, that drives the curriculum and dictates how a classroom is set up, how teachers communicate with parents and children, and how class activities are documented.

For the teachers, developing an emergent curriculum means more work, more planning and more creativity as they develop customized plans each year. For the children, the classroom is their playroom for self-discovery and exploration, not one conceived by an academic in an ivory tower.

What does this look like in real life?

The Orange Sun School (OSS) Panda teachers turned their kids' wasteful litter-bugging ways into an exploration of trees and a Tree Project emerged.

The Yellow Sun School (YSS) Gray Whales turned their superhero play that was mainly based on TV/movie characters, into a project to honor the children's need to feel powerful. The kids crafted hand-made capes, created their own superhero personas, wrote their own plays and performed for their peers. (See pages 6 to 9 for more on these emergent themes in the classroom.)

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“For reflective teachers, working with children is a journey filled with joys and struggles that leads to an engaged and nourishing professional life.”

- Deb Curtis, Early Childhood Educator and Author



“Each time one prematurely teaches a child something he could have discovered himself, that child is kept from inventing it and consequently from understanding it completely.”

- Jean Piaget, Psychologist

Reflective Teaching

Continued from Page 2

The heart of the Pacific Primary experiences are times like these when children go full-throttle into imaginary worlds and deep learning. Fueling these moments are the children’s individual sensibilities and developmental needs, but the catalyst comes from the teacher’s skill of observation and curriculum planning.

How do Pacific Primary’s teachers create an environment that ignites imagination and curiosity in their students? What process drives the development of the emergent curriculum that attracts so many families?

According to OSS Polar Bear Lead Teacher Brian Silveira, reflective teaching is a process that involves paying close attention to the children and to ourselves. Teachers constantly ask themselves tough questions, such as where is the children’s curiosity driving them? What needs are going unmet? How can we turn perceived problems into solutions? By taking an observer’s stance, Pacific Primary teachers are able to collaboratively reflect on these questions and develop curriculum according to their observations.

OSS Prairie Dog Lead Teacher Leanne Foley believes that reflective teaching allows teachers to better understand the children and be more intentional about their teaching practice.

“There’s a lot that has to happen in a day in a preschool classroom,” she explains. “There’s so much curriculum that’s happening before your eyes. When you’re able to step back and observe, it slows you down. You can look deeper at small interactions you might otherwise miss.”

When the teachers bring their observations back to their team, they slip into what Leanne calls “solution mode.” Instead of determining that a behavior is a “problem,” like taking a long time to wash hands - they may instead realize that the children have a great interest in water, and water play can be set up!

Collaboration is key, according to Belann. “Having all those incredible minds together to solve a problem is powerful,” she reflects.

Creating such a dynamic environment does not come without cost. Time, space and resources all face greater pressure. But undeterred, Pacific Primary recognizes the importance of the reflective teaching process and how crucial it is for providing a responsive and emergent curriculum. The school is now a Preschool for All program, which has helped with the funding of substitute teachers to cover staff meeting time and it has raised additional funds to train

and build the skills of the staff to be reflective.

And as Belann is quick to point out, the effort has energized the staff. Reflective teaching keeps teachers excited about their profession and leads to their greater dedication and longevity.

“When you enter a classroom and feel the excitement of the teachers and children learning together, the energy is tangible and the room is alive and bursting with energy,” explains Belann.

And like everything at Pacific Primary, it takes a team effort.

Belann notes that reflective teaching “requires support from the community through appreciation and respect of our teachers as educators.”

Not only does reflective teaching and emergent curriculum draw families to Pacific Primary, it also makes the school a place for educators to develop their craft. Reflective teaching, Leanne says, “takes the doing part of the job into a thinking part that feels more rich and satisfying. It forces us to grow. Most of my growth comes from talking with those around me about what I’m doing. It’s helped me to establish my feeling as a professional.”

Belann shares in this satisfaction and places teacher growth within the larger Pacific Primary vision.

“That’s the joy! My dream was for Pacific Primary to be a model school and to acknowledge our teachers as the incredible educators that they are,” beams Belann. “We know that through this type of education, we are encouraging children’s dispositions for a love of learning, creativity and focus. This is a life-long gift.”



Lawrence Jossel and Riley making latkes with the Coyote class.

Alumni Notes

By Lily Tung Crystal

Alumni Families

Next year is a watershed year for Pacific Primary. Not only is it the school’s 40th anniversary, but it will also be a record year in terms of returning alumni families. Eight alumni parents will have children at Pacific Primary—the largest number in the school’s history.

When she thinks of her time at Pacific Primary, **Myesha Brown (1985)** remembers “laughter and being happy, safe and joyful,” she says. So when she and her daughter Kennedy moved to San Francisco when Kennedy was four months old, it was no surprise that Pacific Primary immediately came to mind. “I remember getting on the plane in Atlanta and saying to myself, ‘She can go to Pacific Primary now.’” Since Kennedy started school as a Sandpiper in September, Myesha has felt closely connected to her daughter’s experience. “The first day I dropped her off, I felt like nothing had changed about the school. I knew that she was going to have an amazing time there because I remember that’s what I had.”

Amy Cebrian (1982) had a similar feeling to Myesha when it came to choosing a school for her children. “There was never any question in my mind that our kids would need to be at Pacific Primary,” she says. Currently her daughter Gloria is a Rainbow Dolphin, and her son Nathaniel will be a Gray Whale in the fall. Since coming back, Amy has enjoyed re-engaging with the community and forming strong relationships with the current families. “These are such special years of their lives,” muses Amy. “We feel so lucky to be back at Pacific Primary. It has been such a vibrant community, has withstood the test of time, and still shines all these years later, for my kids to create their own wonderful memories here—how amazing is that?”

Jennie Anderson’s (1984) son Nate will be a Sandpiper in the fall, but it won’t be the first time Jennie has returned to Pacific Primary. She taught here a few summers when she was in high school and helped organize fundraiser events for the Roxie Jones Tuition Assistance Fund. “I have memories of field trips, climbing the jungle gym, and playing in the sand,” she recalls, “and of Roxie, her big smile, energy and warmth.” Coincidentally, Jennie’s husband had Belann as a teacher at another preschool, so when they had their son, his attending Pacific Primary seemed like a natural progression. “When he was born, we thought it would be a great place for him. It’s fun to revisit the school and be reminded of what a great place it is, but it’s

also exciting to see Pacific Primary thrive in new ways. We’re excited that Nate will be part of the next generation, and it’s crazy to think that someday his kids may even go to school there.”

Both Amy and Jennie’s good friend **Gabriella Fracchia (1982)** also taught at Pacific Primary as a high school student and helped put together fundraising events for Roxie’s Tuition Assistance Fund. Now the three friends are excited that, like them, their children will attend school together. Gabriella’s son Giacomo will be a Gray Whale next year. “I want Giacomo to be exposed to as much diversity as possible. And what Pacific Primary has is rare—the ability to access kids from different backgrounds. It’s a true micro-community of San Francisco. I had a good education throughout my entire life, but Pacific Primary still stands out to me as the best school I attended. Now that Giacomo is going there, it feels like coming home.”

Other Alumni News

Emily Baker (1995) is serving as a team leader in AmeriCorps NCCC in the southern region of the U.S.

Cecily (Ceci) Brown (1995) graduated from California State University Long Beach last year.

Anarose Reardon-Helferd (1997) is a senior at Seattle University and will go to law school next year.

Christina Kitlinski-Hong (1999) is a sophomore at Loyola University.

Arianna Jacobs (1989) got married in London in May and is currently living and working in Dublin, Ireland on independent projects that utilize her skills and experience in writing and the fine arts. A Columbia University graduate with a degree in art history, she previously worked as an art specialist. Her proud and happy mother **Elyse Jacobs**, Expressive Arts specialist at the Orange Sun School (OSS), created the Expressive Arts Program and has been a vital part of our program for 28 years.

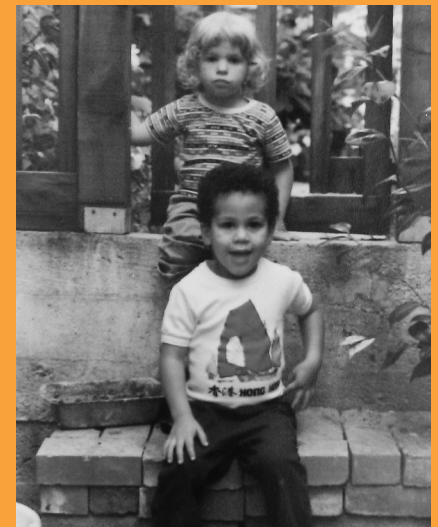
Celena Tyler (1997) graduated from Harvard University in June 2014.



Jennie Anderson on the old jungle gym on the YSS playground.



Amy Cebrian (right) and fellow alum Willie Mae Pryor Murphy enjoy lunch at Pacific Primary.



Gabriella Fracchia with fellow alum Scott Campra-Brantley. Like Gabriella’s son Giacomo, Scott’s daughter Winter will be starting at Pacific Primary this fall.

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2013-2014

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Newsletter Commitee

This Newsletter is written and produced annually by current parents and board members of Pacific Primary, under the guidance of the school's directors. We are deeply grateful to the following parents and staff for their hard work and contribution to the Newsletter:

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Board President's Letter

By Michael Dunn



An early summer morning, as the school year winds down, is always a wonderful time for reflection. All of the rituals associated with saying goodbye to one school year and getting ready for some summer diversions present the perfect opportunity to practice some of the principles of curiosity and observation that are at the heart of reflective teaching.

I am coming to the end of my sixth year in the Pacific Primary community, and my fifth year on the board. With the latest ten-week old addition to my family, resting in a crib just a room away, we still have aways to go before we will have to say good bye to the

wonderful teachers, amazing leadership and magical experiences that we see every day at the school.

The board is in the third year of activating a revamped strategic plan for the school. The plan outlines four key priorities: (1) maintain high caliber staff and parent community leadership; (2) enhance financial sustainability and enhance fund development systems; (3) deepen internal community cohesion, and (4) enhance infrastructure development. We have made solid progress on many fronts, including refinancing the debt, strengthening professional development and expanding the tuition assistance programs. But our most important work is still in front of us.

As we look forward to celebrating Pacific Primary's 40th anniversary next fall, I also want to take a moment to thank all of the families that came before us for your generosity, vision and leadership. We now have a community that serves twice as many families, whose children get to experience the power of reflective teaching each and every day. We hope that everyone will come help us celebrate that and more in the upcoming school year.

Sensory Integration

By Nicole Hsu

It may be the tag in your shirt or the constant tapping of a pen. But these minor "nuisances" can cause much more distress to someone with Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD). Sensory integration is an important aspect of a child's social and emotional development. Luckily for the students at Pacific Primary, the Sensory Motor Program, with its annual screenings and classroom activities and intervention is there to foster their growth.

The school has been fortunate to receive generous annual donations from Mark and Kim Dempster, whose children are alumni. With this funding, in addition to local grants, the school is in its fifth year of sensory motor screenings. This year, all of the older classes at the Yellow and Orange Sun Schools were screened. Children who were identified with possible SPD were referred to occupational therapy to address the developmental issues.

"Sensory motor screening and appropriate intervention before children leave Pacific

Primary is critical for their success in elementary school," says Belann Giarretto, the school's Executive Director.

In addition to screenings, Pacific Primary also offers parent education and professional development to all of its teachers. Teachers support the children by teaching them how to self-regulate or soothe themselves when they are feeling overwhelmed. They integrate sensory motor skills into daily classroom activities and routines.

"Understanding the importance of sensory development has been a vital tool in the classroom. When we see children struggling with fine motor or gross motor activities, we put specific materials out to help children develop and mature, so they can practice and feel more confident. These activities are developmentally appropriate and usually fun for the children, so they don't even know how hard they are working! We see great benefits and results from OT and are grateful our school offers screenings once a year." - Kelly Fox

A Message from the Directors

By Belann Giarretto and Lynn Turner



"We want to know what the children think, feel and wonder. We believe that the children have things to tell each other and us that have never been heard before. We are always listening for a surprise and the birth of a new idea. This practice supports a searching together for new meaning. Together we can become a community of seekers." Louise Boyd Cadwell, Professor of Early Childhood and Author.

This inspiring quote describes how to become a reflective teacher. This year our teachers focused on reflective practices because we know that reflection allows us to go deeper in our work and with the children. In a full-day program it is challenging to find this time, but we are continuing to create space for teachers to utilize these skills.

Margie Carter and Deb Curtis, Early Childhood Educators and authors, have been important mentors to Belann and other teachers because of their focus on reflective teaching. To our great delight, Preschool for All has embraced the authors' work and they have offered reflective teaching workshops and classes across the city.

Deb Curtis observed Pacific Primary and created a half-day workshop for our staff on "Being a Reflective Teacher." It was thrilling to have both Margie and Deb visit our schools and hear their positive comments. Their training focused on stories of the way children learn, written by teachers who used a reflective process, to not only understand how children learn, but also how they can improve their own craft through collaboration and critical thinking.

Deb and Margie encouraged us to create this environment of curiosity and inquiry with our children by using "A Thinking Lens for Reflection and Inquiry." The key tenets of this approach include: know yourself,

find the details that engage your heart and mind, seek the child's point of view, examine the physical/social/emotional environment, collaborate with others to gain a broader perspective, and consider the options available and make change happen.

At Pacific Primary, we're providing more time for teachers to think about their approach to learning and collaborate with other members of the staff to encourage and enable this culture of reflection. Lead teachers now spend two hours per week outside of the classroom and weekly curriculum planning time has increased to 45 minutes. We've also implemented strategic plans to actively integrate the Reflective Lens approach in our longer-term curriculum planning and hiring practices. For example, all classrooms now use the Reflective Lens key principles in their monthly and weekly meetings to plan and implement curriculum, and all Pacific Primary teaching applicants provide a written reflection on their experience with children.

Brian Silveira, Polar Bear Lead Teacher and Nadia Jaboneta, Coyote Lead Teacher were invited by Margie Carter to join a study tour to New Zealand to learn more about reflective practices. Through our Professional Development Endowment, we were able to send both of them to the weeklong seminar. They both said the trip was "transformative."

As we begin to look toward the 2014/2015 school year, we are inspired by the reflection and inquiry that we have begun as a staff this year. When we start to plan our Work Week in August and our professional development for the year, we are excited to continue to learn more and help our teachers grow in this important area, as we provide a high quality early childhood education for all children at Pacific Primary.

Pacific Primary Staff
2013-2014

Executive Director
Belann Giarretto

Director - Yellow Sun School
Lynn Turner

Finance Director
Amie Haiz

Business and Development Manager
Shannon Rice and Diana Mead

Office and HR Manager
Alexis Ortiz

Yellow Sun School

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Hanna Alemayehu Teacher
Shante Jones Teacher

Gray Whales
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Anna Vongvixay Teacher
Keiko Shimozaki Teacher
Randy Johnson Aft. Teacher

Rainbow Dolphins
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Bianca DiPalma Teacher
Chelsea Hepner Teacher

Coyotes
Nadia Jaboneta Lead Teacher
Paulette Zaldivar-Flores Teacher
Darby Hillyard Teacher

Specialist: Music and Movement
Melodi Dalton

Specialist: Expressive Arts
Connie Huang

Support Teachers
Michelle Woo
Jiezhen Wu

Morning Sunroom Teacher
Kate Long

Afternoon Sunroom Teacher
Nancy Anderman

Afternoon Supervisor
Lisa Fox

Chef
Kali Polk-Matthews / Travis Wright

Parking Coordinator
Doug Diboll



Resources for Reflective Parenting:

Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting by Jon Kabat-Zinn and Myla Kabat-Zinn

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids: How to Stop Yelling and Start Connecting by Dr. Laura Markham

All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenthood by Jennifer Senior

Calmer, Easier, Happier Parenting: Five Strategies That End the Daily Battles and Get Kids to Listen the First Time by Noel Janis-Norton

Parenting workshops offered at Pacific Primary

Reflective Parenting

By Anatol O'Donnell

In a time of conflicting and controversial theories, we often question our parenting skills and wonder if we are “doing it right.” That little person whom we’ve created has the ability to reduce us to a ball of frustration and self-doubt, and we wonder how to parent.

However, we parents are sometimes uncomfortable having to assert authority and set limits. We vacillate between giving in to our kid’s tantrums and pleading, or making threats, but not following through with consequences. With young children, this results in parents walking around on eggshells or losing our temper, and children feeling anxious or confused, without resolving the parent-child power struggle.

This is where the principles of Reflective Parenting come in. Developed by psychoanalyst Peter Fonagy and based on the concept of reflective functioning, it is the ability to understand our behavioral responses and respond to the cues and messages our children are sending by their behavior. Reflective Parenting encourages us not to react to the external behavior, but to recognize and reflect on what may be going on internally to cause it, learning to see the conflict from the child’s point of view.

Children handle transitions differently from adults and will continuously push back or test what they can get away with. This is perfectly normal and we should be prepared for this. What we can do is set boundaries and follow through. For example, it’s time to get ready for bed and your child won’t stop playing. You give the child a set time to finish up, and then start putting away the toys. If they start to react, you get down to their level face-to-face, let them know you understand they are upset and are having fun, but stick with the plan each time this scenario arises. Be firm with your behavior, but empathize with their feelings, letting them know they are secure and loved.

Setting limits without guilt or hesitation is key. Start catching behavior before it escalates. Take the time to identify what is behind the behavior and really listen to the child. In times of active conflict, it may be better to limit what one says, because at a certain point, the child stops listening, or they see your explanations as a type of negotiation, and will try to manipulate it. Instead, calmly emphasize that this is the plan, stick to it, and leave it at that. Follow through with positive reinforcement; be specific, such as praising them if they calm down after a tantrum or help put away the

toys, instead of focusing on the negative behavior.

There will, inevitably, be times, when either you lose your cool and regret your actions, or give in to the tantrum just to quiet the child. In both scenarios, repairing the damage by admitting our mistakes and how to remedy, helps strengthen trust and teaches children by example. We can admit we were wrong to yell at our child, are disappointed with our actions, and apologize. Also, we can explain that while we gave them that treat or toy, it was not the right approach and not the behavior we want to see going forward, even if you have to leave the store or event the next time it happens to reinforce your point.

Beyond setting boundaries, reflective parenting sees childhood conflicts as opportunities to learn and self-regulate. While setting expectations, we can involve our children in the process. For example, at the beginning of the school year, my child was having a difficult time at pick-up. She didn’t want to stop what she was doing, would start crying or lose her temper, saying she wasn’t ready to leave. It was exasperating to say the least and was very uncharacteristic. We worked with her teachers to have her be more prepared. We drew up an agreement with her for what we expected of her and what we would do, such as have a teacher inform her we were coming, and give her some time to wrap up her activity. It made a huge difference at pick up, with less temper tantrums and her being more ready to leave when we arrived. Eventually, we didn’t have to call ahead, and she was also more communicative about how her day went.

Start the process early and often. It is far more manageable with a four-year old, rather than a fourteen year old. The child learns to identify and reflect on their feelings and behavior, not be overwhelmed by them. It not only benefits the child, but also improves our skills in managing our own feelings and reactions.

While we have different parenting approaches, we all want to have a healthy parent-child relationship that allows us to feel more confident in our abilities, and enables our child to develop the tools to be resilient and develop self-discipline. Reflective Parenting is an ongoing process, that we can build upon to achieve positive outcomes.



Coyotes: CONSTRUCTION

After focusing on the children’s interests for a few months, the teachers noticed a consistent curiosity around the building and the connecting of materials. They decided to make this the theme of their first project of the school year. Coyotes began to explore materials that might make a strong foundation for their buildings: cardboard, tape, toothpicks, clay, straws, play-dough, branches, etc. The teachers obtained a batch of scrap wood, and the Coyotes put the pieces together in different ways, often focusing on foundations. The class ventured into the neighborhood in search of buildings under construction and found a home on Fulton that was getting a new foundation. They read the book “Iggy Peck Architect,” and explored planning and measuring. They learned about circles and how to measure the circumference, radius and diameter, using real measuring tape. An architect visited their class and showed them his notebooks, models, and photos. The Coyotes were very attentive and had lots of questions. They began to build a cork “ceiling scraper,” painting it and experimenting with different mediums of connecting the corks, so that they could reach the goal of building it to reach the ceiling.



Polar Bears: RAMPS

The children were very interested in ramps from the beginning of the year. The teachers decided to observe their play more closely. At first it appeared that the children were rolling the ball down the ramp over and over again with little change or challenge, but upon closer observation, they noticed the schema and hypothesis that the children were working on. Every time they made a new discovery, they passed the knowledge on to their peers by shouting out what they had accomplished. “We made it go loop-de-loop!” The children were not always successful in creating ramps in the way they wanted, but they were persistent in their attempts. They naturally experimented with different things that could roll or slide down the ramp. Several Lego ships were carefully made to fit perfectly inside the grooves of the ramp; this kept the ships straight in their trajectory. As time went on, the children were challenged to make longer, structurally sound ramps. At the same time, they were no longer fazed when their ramps fell down, because they were confident that they could rebuild one quickly.

Emergent Themes in the Classroom

Continued from page 6 & 7



Pandas: PAPER AND TREES

In November, the Pandas were really engaged with drawing and cutting paper. Every day, the teachers were finding scraps of paper all over the floor. They decided to help the children explore paper and where it comes from. They felt that if the children learned more about how paper is made, perhaps they would use it more mindfully. They asked the question “What do we know about paper and what do we want to know?” It didn’t take long for the Pandas to yell out “It comes from trees!!” Our focus then shifted to trees. We began measuring trees and counting the inside rings. The children learned all of the parts of a tree, how trees drink, and what foods trees give us. The project led to cooking projects, art projects, counting projects, and wonderful field trips. Most of all, it gave the Pandas a chance to slow down and appreciate how amazing trees are!



Rainbow Dolphins: FIRE

On a field trip to Alamo Square Park, the children gathered wood and worked together to “build a fire.” The endeavor continued in the classroom and the children started sharing their theories and predictions about how to start a fire. The teachers demonstrated respect for their ideas by listening, asking questions, and observing, as they tested out their theories. They discovered that the children were curious about where fire comes from, how to put it out, and how fire can change the property of things. The following week, they visited a Redwood Grove to deepen the experience. The children built nature homes, discovered sap, and climbed trees. During Circle Time, they demonstrated their understanding about building a campfire using real wood. They also shared ideas on how to get a fire going: rubbing sticks together and getting the bark off to get the fire that’s inside. Other topics included what materials can/cannot be used, why rocks might be included, and how to protect people from a fire.

Reflective Community

By Rene Garcia

The dam was started by someone else before we even got there. The children all set out by water; six of us in three inner tubes, floating out from the dock of the rental house (an auction item, naturally) and across the river, to where the public beach area was located.

Someone who’d been there before us had piled together some of the river rocks, creating a small break in the water along the river’s edge. A few of us sat there and watched the water push its way around. Instinctively, we gathered a few more rocks and set them in place at the end of the dam. The task became immediately clear. The wider the dam, the further out the water would have to flow to work its way around. Immediately, and without instruction, the boys all sprang into action.

Building the dam became the day’s mission, and each of us set out for the biggest rocks we could carry. The boys teamed up to gather heavier rocks, boys with their fathers lugged over even bigger rocks. And fathers hauled the very biggest rocks. The dam grew quickly, and I delighted in assembling the collected stones into position. The younger boys eventually lost interest, abandoning the project for unexplored terrain across the river. Occasionally, they would return, sometimes bringing back a big rock that seemed right for the cause, but the dam was now their fathers’ domain. If there was a call to lunch, we missed it. By the time the sun started to fall

behind the trees, our dam stretched a good five or six yards. While it never disrupted the actual river, it artfully hugged the coastline and inadvertently created a fine wading pool that the younger siblings and dogs enjoyed.

I’ll never forget what Belann said at our first big parent orientation; “Look around... you’re going to be friends with some of these people for the rest of your life.” That proclamation seemed like it was meant for our kids, but I don’t remember if kids were even at that event. Up until that point, I had never considered the effect that preschool would have on my own friendships. I had never been part of a parent community before. Suddenly I was presented with dozens of new friends, all of whom were parents, so we had that in common.

It’s been six years since our first child entered Pacific Primary. And while it’s been a real delight watching both of our kids make new friends and start having their own plans and parties to go to, it’s been even nicer playing along side them. And now I get why all the “maintenance days” are mandatory. It’s not because our tuition won’t cover a few repairs and some cleaning. It’s because every now and then parents have to play along too. And if you can’t make it on enough field trips, or the poker party isn’t your thing, maybe there’s a dam to be built.



Allyson Jossel, Erica Weiss and Lawrence Jossel creating a fabulous auction dinner.

Pacific Primary Staff

2013-2014

Orange Sun School

Penguins
Saeda Fuller
Patricia Phillips
Dylan Turner
Lead Teacher
Teacher
Teacher

Prairie Dogs
Leanne Foley
Jane Kolb
Lisa Koester
Andrea Henriquez
Lead Teacher
Teacher
Teacher
Aft. Teacher

Pandas
Kelly Fox
Alyssa Chazen-Richards
Marcia Kondo
Lead Teacher
Teacher
Teacher

Polar Bears
Brian Silveira
Daniel Gill
Shirin Kelley
Kathleen Hernandez
Lead Teacher
Teacher
Aft. Teacher
Teacher

Specialist: Music and Movement
Kevin Gerzevitz

Specialist: Expressive Arts
Elyse Jacobs

Sunroom Teacher
Sabrina Brewer

Sunroom Afternoon Teacher
Support Teacher
Sean O’Connor

Afternoon Supervisor
Rebecca Walsh

Chef
Amy Fernandez

Full-Time Substitute (YSS/OSS)
Sarah Watkins

Emergent Themes in the Classroom

By Katrina Jankowski



Reflective teaching allows themes to emerge from the children's interests. These themes invite deep exploration and provide diverse learning opportunities. The following are examples of the Projects that developed in each classroom this year.



Penguins: SOUND

The Penguins' strong interest in music and singing inspired their teachers to explore sound. Throughout the year, the children connected through singing. First, they all sang songs they all knew; now they sing songs they've learned and created with Kevin, Music and Movement Specialist at the OSS. They also showed great skill and imagination in creating their own instruments with available materials. Together, they drummed, strummed, sang and improvised. During morning circles, the class enacted well-known stories that further explored sound. For example, when they enacted "The Three Bears" with puppets and props, the teachers talked about size—big, medium and small—and sounds—loud, soft, high and low—as the bears tried the porridge, used their chairs and tried their beds. In another activity, they experimented with the different sounds that can be made by tapping on vessels that are full or half-full of water. They created a delightful concert with these sounds! The classroom loft is often transformed into an experimental music stage, where the Penguins display custom-made music instruments and perform songs.



Gray Whales: SUPERHEROES

The Superhero Project was brought about by the Gray Whales' interest in Superhero play. The need to feel powerful is important for Gray Whale-aged children and the teachers found that the children's play was often aggressive and based on TV/Movie characters instead of emerging from their own imaginations and creativity. To encourage the children's play to be more creative and not scripted by the media, the teachers had the Gray Whales create their own Superhero personas, such as Frisbee Man and Lily Diamond Heart. The children made their own capes and wrote story-plays using their own and their classmates' Superhero characters. Finally, they acted out these stories with their peers.



Sandpipers: BABIES

To help the Sandpipers transition to pre-school at the beginning of the year, the teachers focused on families, asking the question, "What makes a family?" They hung pictures of the children's families in the room and discussed their new 'Sandpiper family'. Five of the Sandpipers had new babies in their families and the teachers observed that when a baby sibling visited the classroom, the children were very interested. They also began to incorporate babies into their dramatic play. To help the Sandpipers get a deeper understanding of babies, the teachers asked them to bring in baby pictures of themselves and we made a large collage with both baby pictures and current pictures. The Sandpipers enjoyed sharing their knowledge and interest in babies through conversations, songs, books, and play. They also had hands-on experiences with babies when two sibling babies were brought to their class and were bathed by the Sandpipers.



Prairie Dogs: TAPE

In January, the teachers observed the Prairie Dogs using tape as a tool to feel powerful. The children were creating costumes out of different colored masking tape. The teachers created a "Tape Web" to generate curriculum ideas that would support this interest. These included power cuffs made out of tape and tubes, large tape murals, including a tape wall in the classroom, tape magnets, a large tape ball, and other creative activities that allowed the children to stretch their imaginations. The Tape Project allowed children to use this open-ended, sticky material to enrich their learning in all areas of development. Measuring, cutting, and applying tape were opportunities to practice fine motor skills, facilitate cognitive development and spatial awareness, and support emotional growth, as children felt proud of their new skills and hard work. Working collaboratively on group murals and using tape as a prop to support play, strengthened their social skills.